

Inquiry-based Touring and Open-ended Questions

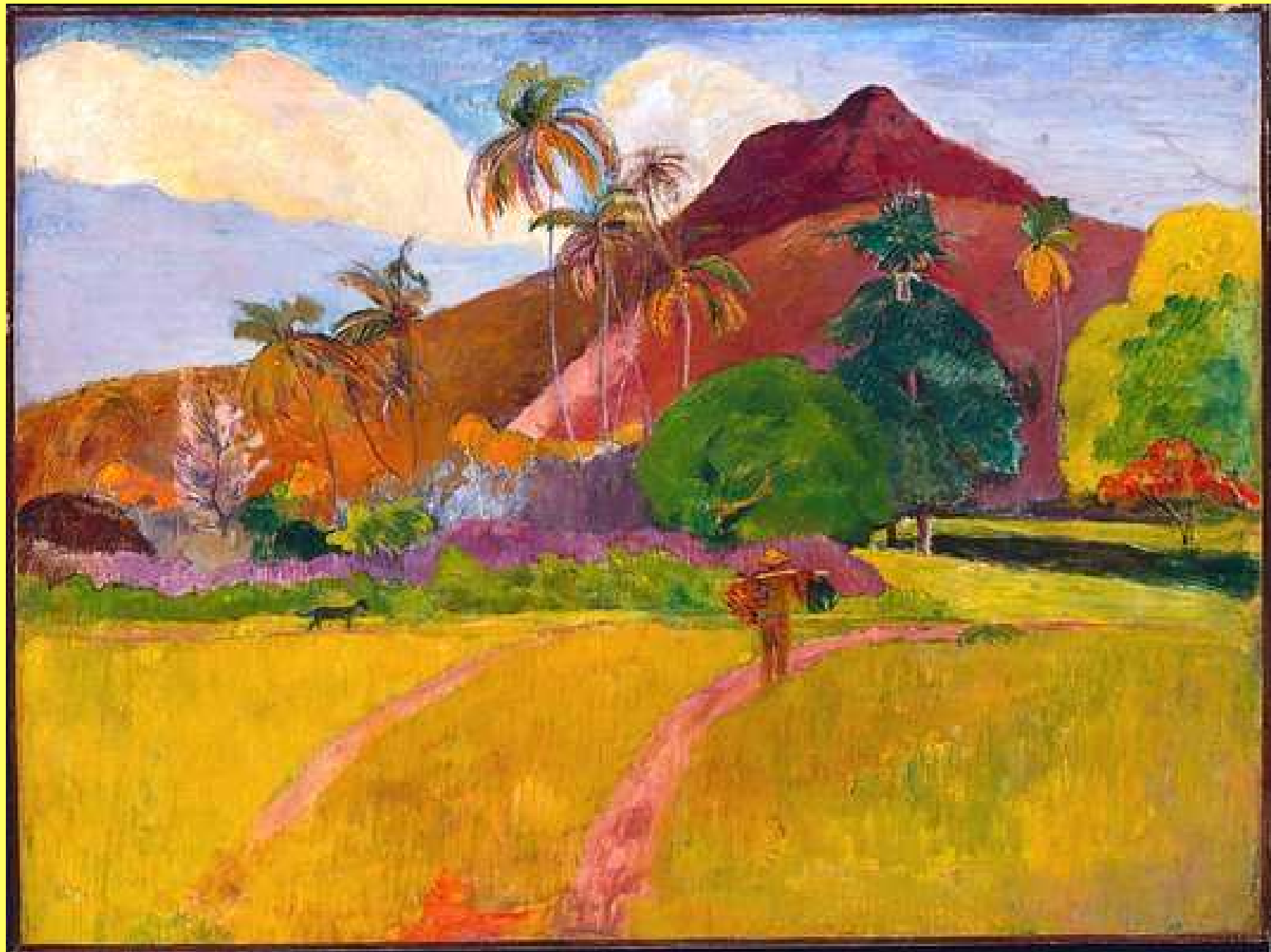


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“Inquiry teaching assists visitors to transition into learners by helping them develop and practice learning skills—skills they can use again on return visits and in other contexts.”

--Alan Gartenhaus

The Minneapolis Institute of Art enriches the community by collecting, preserving, and making accessible outstanding works of art from the world's diverse cultures.



**What can you realistically hope
to accomplish in a one-hour
tour?**

Why test people on what they don't know?

Ask them about what they do know:
their encounter with the art work.

Teaching is collective.

Teaching is dynamic.

Open-ended questions stimulate
peoples' creative thinking.



Ask as many
open-ended
questions as
possible.

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Ultimately, it is up to the guide to determine the balance between information and interaction on a tour.

Keep in mind that every time you offer a fact or a judgment about an artwork, you limit discussion.

Types of Open-ended Questions

Descriptive:

LOOK



What's going on in this picture?



Describe the weather in this scene. What do you see that makes you say that?



Describe the colors you see in this painting.
How do the colors used in this painting differ from the colors in the painting we just looked at?

Interpretive:

EXPLORE

Why do you think the artist made the sky yellow in this painting?





How do you think the artist feels about the man in this portrait?



Why do you think the artist used these particular colors?

Associative:

RELATE



What would you do in this room?

How is this room different from your living room?



What kinds of clothing do you wear on a special occasion?



What if you stood in this position – what would it feel like?

Ask open-ended questions
that encourage multiple
responses.





Ask follow-up questions that encourage even closer looking and which ask individuals to support their observations with evidence from the artwork being discussed.



Ask questions that are appropriate for the people you are talking to. Consider age, learning level, experience with looking at art, language, culture, etc.



Ask one question at a time.

Avoid asking “yes or no” questions. These type of questions stop a discussion as soon as the responses are given.

Avoid asking questions that begin with “Can you...” or “Who can...”

These types of questions automatically set up some group members to fail if they “can not” see or do whatever it is you are asking.





Do not be afraid of silence. Allow people time to observe, process, and respond.

Listen to responses and treat all serious responses as equal even if you think some are not the “right” answers.

Be flexible enough to let responses to questions determine how the discussion of an artwork will unfold.